

The Most Neglected Commandment in the Church - **Exodus 20:8-11** - "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 - "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [14] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. [15] You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

This fourth command, this command about setting a day apart for God, *is the only command that begins with the key word, "remember."* We're not told to *remember* that killing is wrong, or stealing, or committing adultery. *But we're told that we must resist the mindlessness that is so common about God's day.* That word *remember* means there is something here I am likely to forget. Or *overlook*. Or conveniently *justify and explain away*.

1) **THE COMMAND IS TO CELEBRATE THE FAITHFULNESS AND GOODNESS OF OUR CREATOR GOD -**

In this sense it actually *predates* the Mosaic Law - **Exodus 20:11** - "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Moses didn't make the day holy. God made it holy. And it didn't become holy on Mount Sinai. Its roots go back, long before the giving of the law, to the creation of the world. The text says God "*rested*" on the sabbath day. *Why?* Was He tired? Was the Almighty just totally wiped out? Was His back sore or His hands blistered?

The creation account gives us some help here (*and notice the seemingly literal creation assumptions in the explanation given by God Himself in Exodus 20:11*). In Genesis we read that God rested on the third day, *not because He was overwhelmed with fatigue, but to pause and celebrate the goodness of the created world.* That's what God did on the sabbath day. He *openly declared the goodness of all that He had made.* So the commandment stands as a reminder to *reflect on God's power, His majesty over all that is, to reflect on Who made us and to Whom we will all give account.*

Perhaps, before anything else, this command calls people to acknowledge a *sacred focus to all of life.* It's a command given to *keep us from living life with ourselves at the center of everything.* It calls us to remember that there's more to us than chemicals and glands. The Sabbath rest isn't just a pause to catch my breath in a busy world. It's a pause to *turn my life from self to God - from my pursuits and plans to His.* *And I can't properly remember God without giving Him this time.*

2) **THE COMMAND IS TO CELEBRATE GOD'S REDEMPTIVE DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE** - This emphasis becomes particularly clear in the recording of the commandments in **Deuteronomy 5:12-15** - "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [14] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. [15] You shall *remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.*"

From our first point, we saw that this one day was set apart right from the creation of the world. God establishes the pattern Himself. One day to devote entirely to *reflecting on who made everything - who is in charge - where resources for life itself come from - and to whom everything returns.* This second point expands on this idea. *And this second point is the best place to focus on the change from the Sabbath in the Old Testament to the Lord's Day in the New Testament.* Moses records that God's people were to reflect on *one aspect of God's goodness and power in particular.* God was a *delivering God.* He had brought them out of a captivity from which they could never have freed themselves. *God brought them out of bondage.*

The New Testament picks up on this idea and develops a theology of it for believers: **Hebrews 4:9-16** - "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, [10] for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. [11] Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. [12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. [13] And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. [14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Look again at **verse 10**: “....for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” This verse makes a direct link between God resting after His **creation work** and Jesus resting after His **redemptive work**. Then, the first nine words of **verse 11** call each of us to enter into that rest of Christ - “**Let us therefore strive to enter that rest....**”

Let's start putting this together. Because to limit our understanding of the Lord's Day by **framing** it with a legalistic, Old Testament interpretation of merely a day of **rest from activity** misses the New Covenant **remodeling** of what the Lord's Day, as the **fulfillment** of the Old Testament Sabbath, is all about.

We celebrate the **Lord's Day** on the first day of the week, because it celebrates our standing in a **finished work**. **We start our worship on the first day because it pictures a rest of faith that was never earned by any preceding works of merit**. Every Lord's Day we are saying that we stand in a work **done for us**. It comes **before** any of our own works. That's what the Lord's Day pictures.

The Lord's Day is related to the Sabbath in the same way the cross and Resurrection is related to the death of animals offered in the sacrifices in the OT. The Lord's Day doesn't **contradict** the sabbath. It **completes and fulfills** it. On the Lord's Day we rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This also helps us understand the **kind** of rest the Lord's Day is designed to provide. The Lord's Day **is** a day of rest. But not in the way many people think. It's not the rest of lying on the beach or barbecuing burgers on the patio. That's just relaxation.

The **Lord's Day celebrates, and reflects on, and praises God for, the rest of sins forgiven, the rest of a life focused on the freeing power of praise and worship, the rest of joyful obedience to commands that are not a burden because of the new life of the Holy Spirit in the soul, the rest of a redemption that is safe and sure in Christ Jesus.**

And most of all, the Lord's Day, is the rest of celebrating these great realities **undistracted** by the concerns of self and the cares of the rest of the week.

We'll consider two more ideas on this subject next Sunday - next **Lord's Day**.